United Nations

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General reassures Special Committee on decolonization of his continued efforts to implement United Nations plan for peaceful solution to question of Western Sahara.

- Kuwaiti Planning Minister asks Human Rights Commission to demand that Iraq allow humanitarian organizations into Kuwait to save people from disease and hunger.

- Commission on Social Development, ending session, adopts draft resolution on United Nations principles to ensure equal access for older persons to necessities of life; also adopts proposals on social issues.

- Canada and Austria announce contributions to United Nations Agency helping Palestinians prevented from working because of strict curfew in Israeli-occupied territory.

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar this morning opened the 1991 session of the Special Committee on decolonization.

He assured the Committee of his continued efforts towards the implementation of the United Nations plan regarding the question of Western Sahara, which he said would lead to a peaceful, fair and lasting solution to the problem. He expressed hope that the parties would continue to accord particular attention to all issues regarding the implementation of the peace plan.

The Secretary-General said he was maintaining contact with the two parties on all aspects of the question and given their co-operation and political will, a solution would now be within reach.

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The Commission on Human Rights today heard a statement by Kuwait's Minister of Planning, Sulaiman Al-Mutawa, who asked the Commission to demand

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For information media—not an official record

that Iraq allow humanitarian organizations into Kuwait to rescue people from disease and hunger. He also said action should be taken to try the Iraqi regime for war crimes.

Since the Iraqi invasion on 2 August, Mr. Al-Mutawa said, the Kuwaiti people had experienced horror and misery at the hands of the occupying forces. The Iraqi troops had deliberately waged an organized campaign of killing, torture, sexual abuse and plunder. Iraq continued to deny access to Kuwait to United Nations humanitarian missions delivering medicine and food supplies, nor were the International Committees of the Red Cross and Red Crescent allowed in. The Kuwaiti Minister called on the Commission to condemn the Iraqi regime for its inhuman crimes in Kuwait, and to send a clear message to the Iraqi leadership.

Later, at a news conference, Mr. Al-Mutawa said there were reports of increasing Iraqi murders of Kuwaiti civilians. That, he said, might be an attempt by the occupied forces to hide evidence of torture before the arrival of allied troops.

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The Commission for Social Development, concluding its session in Vienna, adopted 12 resolutions on social issues, and another on United Nations principles ensuring equal access for older persons.

By the resolutions adopted, the Commission appealed to Governments to take up, as a matter of urgency, the study of fundamental social problems, such as minimum requirements for human life, income security and equal opportunities.

Another resolution called for increased assistance to African countries to help improve or to establish infrastructures through a favourable economic environment.

The Commission decided that the two priority themes for its 1993 session would be: the social consequences of population growth; and changing social conditions, with particular emphasis on the family.

Speaking to the press at the end of the meeting, the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, Margaret J. Anstee, said this year's session represented a breakthrough in the field of development.

One of the problems of the Commission, she said, was that it did not deal with one subject alone; the term "social" covered many different things. She emphasized that progress had been made regarding the disabled. An open-ended working group had been established to elaborate international standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for the disabled.

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The Canadian Government has announced a contribution of $1.7 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The donation will cover the purchase of food commodities to be distributed by the Agency in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank.

The contribution is in response to UNRWA's special appeal to donors to support emergency food distributions in the Israeli-occupied territory, where Palestinians have been under sweeping curfews since the beginning of the Gulf crisis. The curfews have prevented Palestinians from going to their jobs and many have been without income for the past five weeks.

The UNRWA has reported that food stocks are running low in many Palestinian households and that families are running out of money with which to buy food during breaks in the curfew. The Agency plans to distribute more than 47,000 tonnes of food commodities to 300,000 Palestinian families in the occupied territory over the next three months.

Earlier this week, the Australian Government had donated about $400,000 to UNRWA.

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